



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

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For Immediate Release

**Department of Health and Family Services Revamps
BadgerCare Eligibility Verification Process**
Changes Result in Improved Access to BadgerCare

(MADISON, September 14, 2005) - The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services said today it is taking steps to improve the process it uses to determine if people are eligible for BadgerCare, the state insurance program for low-income families with children.

“The Department reviewed the BadgerCare application process and found that certain barriers may prevent people from providing us the information that we need to determine if they are eligible for benefits,” said Helene Nelson, Secretary of Health and Family Services. “We took immediate steps to improve the system so families who are eligible for BadgerCare have access to health care.”

A report released today by the Department, “Evaluation of BadgerCare Employer Verification Process,” shows that the number of BadgerCare recipients declined following the implementation of new procedures that require applicants to have their employers complete state forms verifying income and insurance to determine eligibility. Employer verification of income and insurance was mandated by the 2003-2005 Biennial Budget Act.

The Department outlines an action plan in the report to improve the employer verification process. Changes already implemented include:

- Cover letters and forms were rewritten to make the due date and instructions clearer
- Spanish language forms were modified
- Employers allowed to return forms via fax
- The deadline for returning forms was extended from 10 days to 20 days

By January 2006, the Department will:

- Allow workers to choose between verifying earnings by using a form or by pay stubs
- Mail the health insurance verification form directly to employers
- Require employers to complete and return the forms or face a financial penalty assessment of for each application they fail to return
- Extend the deadline for returning forms from 20 to 30 days
- Explore options to improve access to BadgerCare for Spanish-speaking people
- Increase awareness of the eligibility process through a public information campaign

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“The Department has already made important changes that have had a positive impact. In July and August, there was an increase in the number of BadgerCare recipients for the first time since we started the employer verification process,” noted Nelson. “Our top priority is to make sure that families have access to services they need to be healthy and strong.”

Low income families who have income that makes them ineligible for Medicaid, who are not covered by health insurance, and do not have access to affordable employer-subsidized health care coverage can apply for BadgerCare by calling 1-800-362-3002 or by visiting <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov>.

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